



MARKET VAN BUREN

Serving Cass and Van Buren Counties



Annual Report 2023



Cover Image Descriptions:

- Top: Marion Magnolia Farms - Cassopolis, MI **
- Middle Right: Downtown Dowagiac, MI *
- Bottom Left: Mandigo Farms, Inc. - Paw Paw, MI *
- Bottom Right: High Acres Fruit Farm - Hartford, MI *

We love to highlight local sites, vistas, farms and businesses. If you are interested or know of someone in the community that would want to be highlighted, contact Julia Wall at wallj@marketvanburen.org or 269-215-4861.

Picture Credit:

- * Julia Wall (Julia Dawn Photography)
- ** Scott Rose (Photography by Scott Rose)



Growing the Future

With Executive Director, Zachary Morris

Dear Business & Community Leaders:

Last year I wrote to you about a concept called “The Zone” from a youth camp I served at. The idea is we can create an environment of shared economic success in Cass and Van Buren counties. For us to build an environment of cooperation and trust in Southwest Michigan, we need to ensure we are having fun and enjoy our work, we challenge each other to be better, we share successes and support one another, we have a robust structure that is focused on building positive relationships, and we’re inclusive of every individual, business, and community.

It is my hope that in the coming year we build off that concept and introduce a new concept I learned: **Racing to Our Crown**. The idea is that we are all in our own race that we are called to run. While we race to the finish, there’s some key steps we can take together.

1) We must **choose to run the race**. In our work as community and business leaders, we are called to leave it better than we found it and are committed to ensuring our businesses are strong, our communities are vibrant, and the local economy is resilient. We must first choose to be leaders!

2) Next, we **train for victory**. Quite often we enter the arena to compete and grow, however, without preparation we lack the ability to gain traction. Training for victory looks different for all of us. It might mean developing plans, identifying strategic priorities, or cultivating new skills and tools. For Market Van Buren, it has meant identifying priorities such as high-speed internet, workforce housing, and industrial site development and growing our team to support pursuit of these priorities.

3) The next concept is to **run with a purpose**. Our purpose is the reason that we do what we do. It is our motivation and our driving force. You can be in the right race, and even train, but what is motivating you to be a business or community leader? For me, I was inspired to make our community a place my children would want to stay and have their own family one day.

4) Once we have chosen our race, prepared for our race, and are running with a purpose, we have to **stay in the race**! Often in our world, leadership changes in the private and public sectors can result in the unraveling of established plans. What we are seeing in Cass and Van Buren counties is exciting; we are attracting millions of dollars in incentives to grow businesses, improve our streetscapes, and expand infrastructure. By running this race together, our plan is working and we’re on pace to cross the finish line.

5) The final stretch of the race is **receiving our crown**. When one team wins, we all win. My hope is we all have more victories, learning experiences and celebrate and applaud each other’s victories when a race is won.

Our Market Van Buren team, along with our Board of Directors, thanks you for a successful 22-23 fiscal year and we look forward to running our next race **with you** in 2023 and 2024.

Sincerely,

Zachary Morris
Executive Director
Market Van Buren

Our Vision

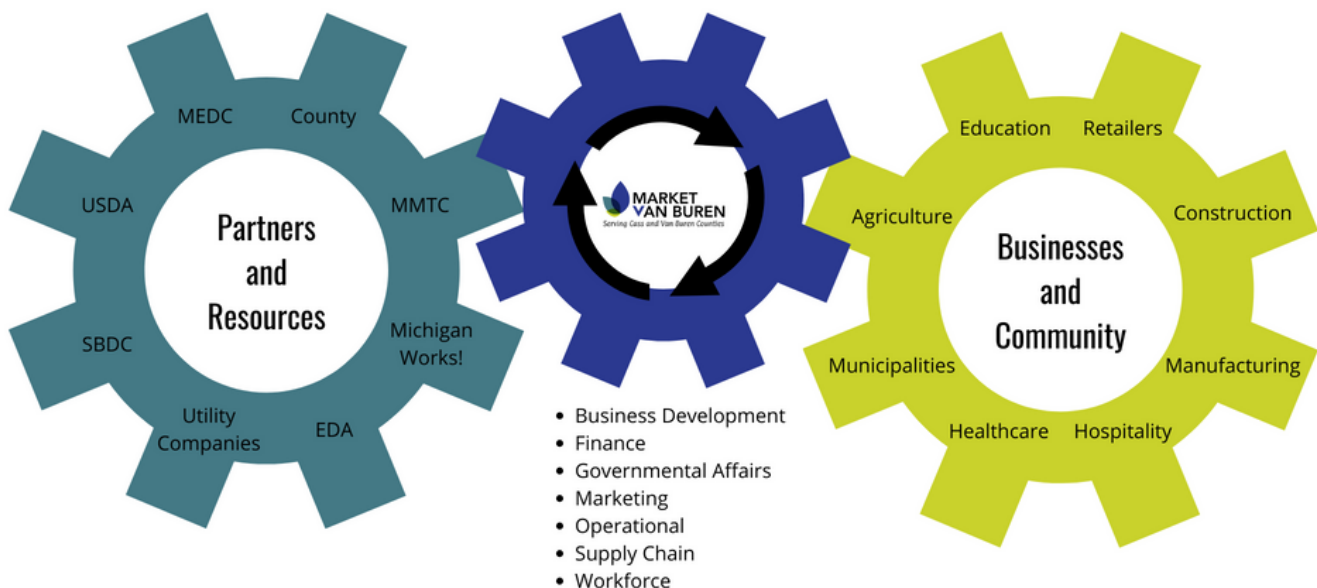
Market Van Buren will provide opportunities for development that enables business and residents to benefit from talented people, strong businesses and vibrant communities.

Our Mission

The mission of Market Van Buren is to attract and strengthen businesses, connect community capital and promote regional advantages.

How We Do Our Work

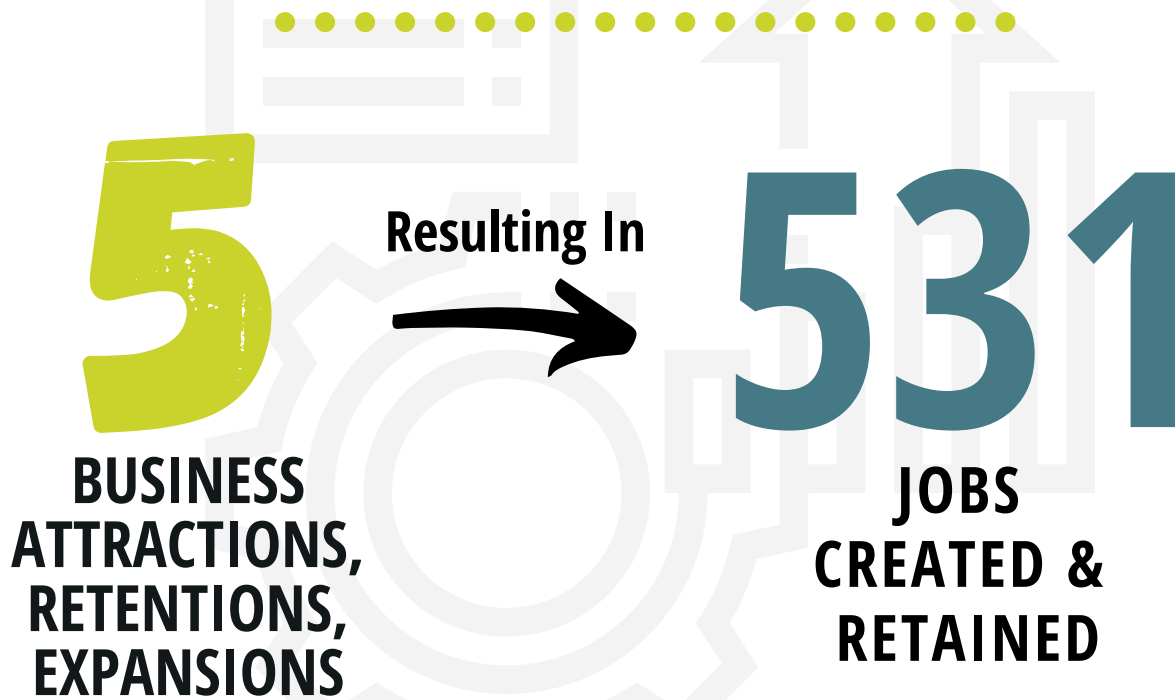
Market Van Buren connects business and community with partners, programs, and resources that can meet their needs.





ECONOMIC IMPACT CASS AND VAN BUREN COUNTIES

Market Van Buren had a direct hand generating the following economic impacts in Cass and Van Buren Counties in the 2022 - 2023 fiscal year:



Our business attraction, retention, and expansion successes meant that our region benefited from the following:





MARKET VAN BUREN 2022 - 2023 IN REVIEW

JULY 2022

Market Van Buren's Economic Development Coordinator, Julia Wall, toured High Acres Fruit Farm in Hartford to highlight and promote local agriculture through photography and social media.



NOVEMBER 2022

The Board of Directors and staff of Market Van Buren held their Strategic Planning Retreat.



A Non-Partisan Election Review was held to educate Market Van Buren investors on the future of our state after the recent election.



SEPTEMBER 2022

Market Van Buren along with its partners at Midwest Energy & Communications, Southwest Michigan First, and the Village of Cassopolis welcomed Governor Whitmer to meet with Hydro leadership and learn about Hydro's decision to relocate to Cassopolis.



We had the opportunity to co-host the Future of the Economy Panel with Southwestern Michigan College.



DECEMBER 2022

We hosted the Michigan Economic Development Corporation CEO Quentin Messer on a tour of Cass and Van Buren Counties. Mr. Messer was able to see and listen to key individuals from the community talk about important company projects, expansions and community growth.





MARKET VAN BUREN 2022 - 2023 IN REVIEW

JANUARY 2023



Over 30 leaders from Cass and Van Buren Counties attended the Community Grant Workshop to learn about grant opportunities and how to successfully apply for them.

FEBRUARY 2023

EQ United celebrated their new building which supports the relocation of their corporate headquarters and EQ systems production in Mason Township, Cass County, Michigan.



MARCH 2023

The 3rd Annual Municipal Summit was attended by over 50 municipal leaders from Cass and Van Buren Counties. Attendees discussed and learned how to apply for state and federal grants that will better our communities.



Market Van Buren hosted the Hiring on Purpose Workshop. Don Crosby with Global Behavior presented a program that equips employers to hire and retain great talent.



JUNE 2023

On June 29, we celebrated outstanding local businesses and municipalities in Cass and Van Buren Counties as part of the 2023 Market Van Buren Awards Event!



MAY 2023

Market Van Buren celebrated the exciting next chapter of the historic Cass County courthouse with local leadership. The courthouse will be starting major construction and renovations in the coming months.





HONORING OUR BUSINESS COMMUNITY



Celebrating a Year of Growth and Opportunity

Market Van Buren hosted the third annual Market Van Buren awards event on June 29, 2023 at Marion Magnolia in Cassopolis.

The event featured food and beverages from local vendors, a networking hour for local business and community leaders, a keynote address by Quentin Messer, the CEO of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and a captivating performance by American Idol Finalist Matt Giraud.

Highlighting Outstanding Local Businesses

The evening included an awards ceremony that recognized outstanding local businesses in five award categories. These businesses were selected as award winners following a rigorous nomination, application, and review process. The Market Van Buren Awards Event recipients were as follows:

- **Economic Development Pioneer of the Year:** CHT USA in Cassopolis
- **Best New Business of 2023:** The Flat Rock Grill in Edwardsburg, The Holden Green Tavern in Cassopolis, Creative Cove in Paw Paw
- **Community Champion of the Year:** Midwest Energy & Communications in Cassopolis
- **Business Innovator of the Year:** EQ United in Mason Township
- **2023 Municipal Trailblazer of the Year:** Covert Township

CHT USA was also honored with a tribute presented by State Senator Jonathan Lindsey and State Representative Steve Carra. The tribute was awarded in recognition of CHT USA's role in implementing strategies for retention, providing hands-on training, and offering new roles which can lead to promotion opportunities.



HONORING OUR BUSINESS COMMUNITY



Celebrating Our Torchbearer Investors

The purpose of the Torchbearer Awards are to recognize the groups whose investment in Market Van Buren continue to power our work for a stronger local economy. All those listed below have established themselves as investors in the last 12 months, and it was our pleasure to celebrate them.

It was with great gratitude that we recognize the following Torchbearer investors:

- CHT USA
- City of Hartford
- Covert Township
- Fishbeck
- Sturgis Bank & Trust
- Village of Bloomingdale





BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT: EXPANDING COMPANIES

Tri-Mation Industries: Mattawan, MI

Tri-Mation started their expansion project in July of 2022 and celebrated a ribbon cutting in June of 2023. Tri-Mation specializes in assembly automation that combines decades of custom-building expertise with the latest automation technology to identify and overcome manufacturing challenges. Through this expansion they created 50 jobs, retained 52 jobs, and invested \$4.7 million in the community.



Western Diversified Plastics: Mattawan, MI

WDP began their expansion project in 2022. WDP is a manufacturing company that combines experience in the design, tooling, and production of close tolerance injection-molded and electromechanical components for the automotive industry. Through this expansion they created 150 jobs, retained 50 jobs, and invested \$14 million in the community.



Burnette Foods: Keeler Township, MI

Burnette Foods started their expansion project in April of 2023. Burnette Foods is a locally and nationally sourced distributor of packaged fruits and vegetables. Through this expansion they created 2 jobs, retained 180 jobs, and invested \$2.1 million in the community.



Marcellus Metalcasters: Marcellus, MI

Marcellus Metalcasters started their expansion project in November of 2022. Marcellus Metalcasters helps companies solve their metal casting challenges. Through this expansion they created 7 jobs, retained 15 jobs, and invested \$1.2 million in the community.



Ralph Moyle: Paw Paw, MI

Ralph Moyle began their expansion project in April of 2023 and celebrated a ribbon cutting in July of 2023. Ralph Moyle is a logistics company that transports agriculture and industry products for local companies. Through this expansion they created 10 jobs, retained 20 jobs, and invested \$4 million in the community.

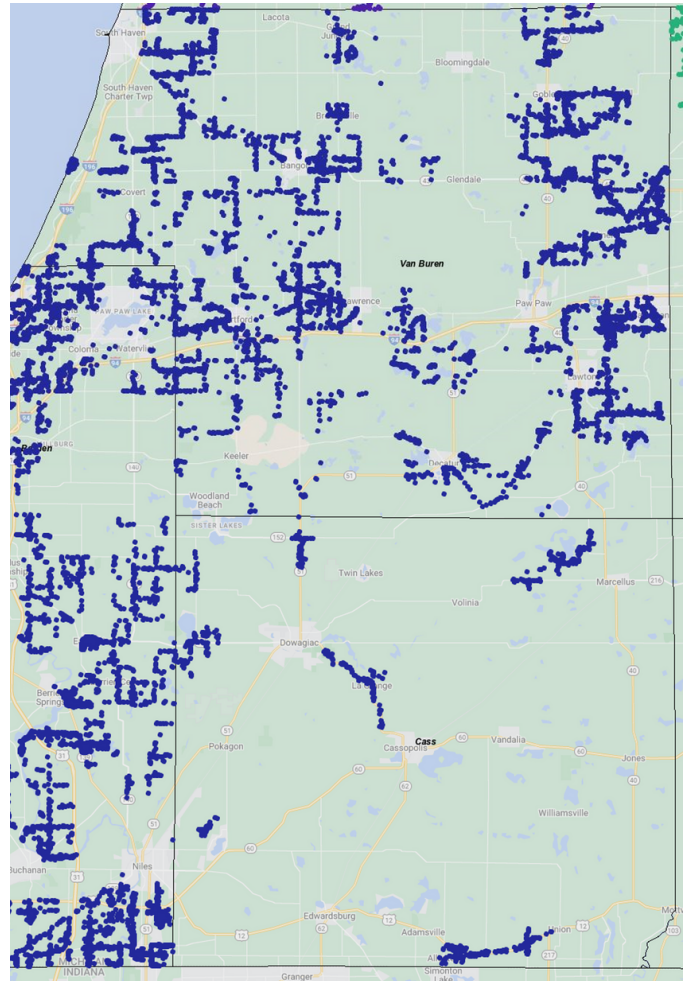




PRIORITY SPOTLIGHT: QUALITY INTERNET ACCESS

During the Covid-19 pandemic, with many adults working from home and the majority of students transitioning to online schooling, it became obvious how important internet access is to ensuring rural communities have access to digital education, employment, and healthcare opportunities.

Progress in Van Buren County: In the fall of 2022, Van Buren County received a parcel-level, GIS-based map of internet availability. This map was used to challenge the FCC's internet availability maps, which allowed more areas in Van Buren County to be eligible for internet expansion grants. In March 2023, Van Buren County and local townships provided matching funds to support Midwest Energy & Communication's (MEC) application to the Michigan Office of High-Speed Internet (MIHI)'s ROBIN grant. MEC was selected as a grant recipient; if awarded as initially announced, roughly 3,400 currently unserved residents of Van Buren County will receive internet access. Final ROBIN award decisions will come late summer of 2023.



Each dot represents a location tentatively awarded to Midwest Energy & Communications through the MIHI ROBIN grant program. Final award locations will be announced in late summer 2023. Image Credit: Michigan High-Speed Internet Office

Progress in Cass County: In late 2022, Market Van Buren wrote a grant application for Cass County to receive funds to develop a county-wide, GIS-based map of internet availability. The grant was awarded, and field work to develop those maps will begin in August. In the meantime, MEC secured matching funds from Cass County and local townships to support their ROBIN application. If awarded as initially announced, roughly 600 currently unserved residents of Cass County will receive internet access.

Next Steps: With their own internet availability maps, Cass and Van Buren counties will be positioned to capitalize on forthcoming Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment funding. The ultimate goal of this effort is to make high-speed internet services available to all residential properties in Cass and Van Buren County, and we made huge progress toward that goal this year!



PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: GRANT READINESS



Securing grant funding requires two elements: preparedness and alignment. First, an applicant needs to have a clear idea of the project they would like to take on and be prepared to clearly explain their project vision to a funder. Second, an applicant needs to find a funding source that aligns with their project vision. Without a clear vision, an applicant can never hope to pull together a competitive grant application; without a funding source that aligns with the project vision, an applicant will never secure a grant.

To help communities in Cass and Van Buren enhance their ability to secure grants, Market Van Buren hosted two events focused on helping communities establish key projects and priorities, plan for key projects and priorities, identify available funding sources, and connect with programs that both increase access to funding and guide communities through project preparation and planning.

The first event was a grant readiness workshop, led by Antero Group and hosted at Southwestern Michigan College. This event focused on getting local communities ready to capitalize on grant opportunities that support strategic development of industrial parks, housing, and public amenities like streetscapes and parks.

The second event was the annual Municipal Summit hosted at the Van Buren County ISD Conference Center. This event featured speakers from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation who highlighted programs like Michigan Main Street and Redevelopment Ready Communities, a panel discussion from local municipal leaders who have benefited from these MEDC programs and grants, and Mary Fowler, Resource Development Director at Kinexus Group, who presented a session on basic grant writing best practices.

Grant Readiness Workshop | January 18

Municipal Summit | March 21

30+

Community leaders in attendance to network and grow

20+

Municipalities and local organizations represented

3 HOURS

Of discussion on funding sources & potential projects

60+

Community leaders in attendance to network and grow

30+

Municipalities and local organizations represented

4 HOURS

Of instruction on grant readiness & funding sources



To Our Investors: Thank You!



Abonmarche • Almena Township • Antero Group
Antwerp Township • Barber Packaging
Bloomingdale Communications • Burnette Foods
Cass County • CHT USA • City of Bangor • City of Harford
City of South Haven • Comcast • Consumers Energy
Covert Township • Crandall Family • Fishbeck
Getman Corporation • Great Lakes Belting
Hartford Chamber of Commerce • Holtec
Honee Bear Canning • Honor Credit Union • Huntington Bank
Indiana Michigan Power • ITC • Lakes & Country
Lawrence Township • Lounsbury Excavating • MEC
Mercantile Bank • Michigan Gas Utilities
Owen Ames Kimball • Paw Paw Chamber of Commerce
Paw Paw Township • Peat's Cider
Schley Nelson Architects • South Have Chamber of Commerce
South Haven Township • St. Julian • Sturgis Bank & Trust
Tapper Automotive • TCF • Tri- Mation Industries
Van Buren County • Vertical Beverage
Village of Bloomingdale • Village of Decatur
Village of Lawrence • Village of Lawton
Village of Mattawan • Village of Paw Paw





Market Van Buren Board of Directors




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President, Barber Packaging

 **Chad Ritchie, Vice-Chairman**
Vice President, Midwest Energy Communications

 **Daywi Cook, Finance Chairman**
Covert Township, Supervisor

 **Griffin Graham, Secretary**
City of South Haven, Assistant City Manager

 **Josh Cosner**
Chief Information Officer,
Kinexus Group

 **Jenn Deamud**
Chief Operations Officer, Kinexus Group

 **Kurt Doroh**
Van Buren County Commissioner

 **Beth Griffin**
Former State Representative

 **Ken Kemerer**
President and Managing Director at
CHT USA

 **Ryan Laylin**
Cass County Commissioner


 **David Manson**
Superintendent of Van Buren
Intermediate School District

 **Derek Nofz**
Community Affairs Area Manager at
Consumers Energy


 **Randy Peat**
Van Buren County Commissioner

 **Arnie Redsicker**
Managing Partner, Giant Lions LLC

 **Paul Schincariol**
Van Buren County
Commissioner

 **Tom Stanek**
Regional Director, Owen Ames Kimball
Co.

 **Donald Stull**
Supervisor, Paw Paw Township

 **Carrie Troyer**
Owner/Blonde #2, Three Blondes Brewing

 **Scott Whiteford**
Financial Advisor, Whiteford
Wealth Management

Note: Roster reflects membership of the board as of June 2023



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 kinexus group

Market Van Buren is a subsidiary of Kinexus Group. Kinexus Group is committed to inspiring positive economic change, one person, one business, one community at a time.

Market Van Buren is an Equal Opportunity Employer.